

Secretary Rusk's News Conference of March 8

Press release 121 dated March 8

Secretary Rusk: I have no opening statement today—

Q. Mr. Secretary— (Laughter.)

A. But—

Q. We don't want you to be at a loss for something to say.

A. I just wanted to comment, in view of [Associated Press correspondent] John Hightower's cordial invitation at our last press conference,¹ I thought I would come back before an undue delay. So, John, do you have the first question?

Q. Yes, sir. On February 18 the Soviet Government sent word it intended to withdraw several thousand troops from Cuba. Can you tell us what the state of that withdrawal is and what the prospects are?

A. Movements are under way. The indication was that several thousand would be taken out by the middle of March. We are, of course, watching that withdrawal with very great interest. And we will make an assessment as to—somewhat later, about exactly what this withdrawal amounts to. But I would not today want to get into the box score of running figures on how the situation stands at this moment.

Q. Could you tell us what you mean, sir, when you say "movements are under way"? Do you mean movements within the island to embarkation points?

A. No. I think there have been movements also actually on ships leaving the island.